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Progress on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council strengthened the international arrangement on forests and identified required actions by its components and partners as their contribution to the international arrangement. At its thirteenth session, the United Nations Forum on Forests will consider the implementation of the resolution. The present report has been prepared to facilitate the deliberation of the Forum on item 9 of the provisional agenda by summarizing main actions taken to implement various provisions of resolution 2015/33.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020, the United Nations Forum on Forests will consider progress in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 at its thirteenth session. In paragraph 56 of the resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Forum at its session in 2018 on the implementation of the resolution. The present report has been prepared to serve as the basis for discussion under item 9 of the provisional agenda of the thirteenth session of the Forum.

II. Background

2. The Forum reviewed the international arrangement on forests at its eleventh session, in May 2015. On the basis of the recommendation of the Forum, the Council adopted its resolution 2015/33, in which it strengthened the international arrangement on forests and extended it to 2030. In the resolution, the objectives for the international arrangement on forests were set out, components and partners were identified, the functions and working modalities of the Forum were specified and the functions of the Forum secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests were agreed upon. The resolution also contained sections on the United Nations Forum on Forests, the United Nations forest instrument, catalysing financing for implementation, monitoring, assessment and reporting, the secretariat of the Forum, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional involvement, involvement of major groups and other stakeholders, the contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests, and quadrennial programmes of work of the Forum.

3. The present report provides a summary of actions taken by members of the Forum, the Forum secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as relevant partners and stakeholders, to implement various provisions of resolution 2015/33.

III. Key actions taken to implement resolution 2015/33

A. United Nations Forum on Forests

4. In section II of resolution 2015/33, the Council specified five core functions of the Forum and decided to strengthen its functioning beyond 2015. In that regard, the Council requested the Forum to carry out its functions on the basis of a strategic plan for the period 2017–2030.

5. The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017–2020 were developed through preparatory work carried out during two meetings of the ad hoc expert group held in April and October 2016 and the meeting of the working group of the Forum held in January 2017. The proposal was agreed upon at the special session of the Forum held in January 2017 and subsequently approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2017/4. The strategic plan was then adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/285. Further information on the strategic plan is provided in section III. J. below.

6. In paragraph 6 of resolution 2015/33, the Council requested that the Forum hold annual sessions for a period of five days (para. 6 (c)) and restructure its sessions and enhance its intersessional work to maximize the impact and relevance of its work, including by fostering an exchange of experiences and lessons learned among countries, regional, subregional and non-governmental partners and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (para. 6 (b)). In this connection, paragraph 6 (f) of the resolution provides specific guidance on restructuring the Forum's sessions into odd-year sessions and even-year sessions. At odd-year sessions, the focus is on discussions on implementation and technical advice, including facilitating the sharing of knowledge and exchanging experiences among members of the Forum, member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional organizations, major groups and other relevant stakeholders and the science-policy interface. At even-year sessions, the focus is on policy dialogue, development and decision-making, taking into account the discussions and proposals of the previous session. In this regard, odd-year and even-year sessions for a given biennium are expected to be linked thematically.

7. To operationalize the restructuring of Forum sessions, members agreed on the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020 at the special session of the Forum held in January 2017. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work and resolution 2015/33, the twelfth session of the Forum, held in May 2017 (an odd-year session), was mainly dedicated to discussions on implementation and technical advice.

8. In developing the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017–2020, a major consideration has been to facilitate input from the Forum to the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the annual meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. To this end, annual sessions of the United Nations Forum on Forests now include a standing agenda item on the contribution of the Forum to the upcoming sessions of the high-level political forum.

9. Technical discussions held during the twelfth session of the Forum were focused on interlinkages of forests with poverty eradication, hunger and food security, gender equality and means of implementation for sustainable development. The Forum's discussions on these themes were aimed at providing input to the discussions held at the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5 and 17.[1]

10. A set of proposals from the twelfth session of the Forum is included in the official documents for consideration at the thirteenth session of the Forum. Given the short period of time between the adoption of the quadrennial programme of work and the first technical session of the Forum, the twelfth session was dedicated to discussions on implementation and technical advice, as well as decisions necessary for transition to the new phase of work.

11. To enhance the impact and relevance of intersessional work and activities, including country-led initiatives and other similar initiatives, the Forum has included a standing item on intersessional activities in its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020. In odd-year sessions, an item on enhanced cooperation,

[1] The inputs of the United Nations Forum on Forests to the 2016 and 2017 meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development are available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=138&menu=3170 and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=814&menu=3170.

coordination and engagement on forest-related issues has also been included, which will serve as an experience-sharing platform for member States, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and relevant organizations and stakeholders.

12. In paragraph 6 (e) of the resolution, the Forum was requested to enhance the contributions of country-led and similar initiatives to its work by ensuring that they directly support the priorities of the Forum, and to update the guidelines for such initiatives. To this effect, the revised draft guidelines for initiatives led by countries, organizations, regions and major groups in support of the Forum were presented to the Forum at its twelfth session in the report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues (E/CN.18/2017/5) and were subsequently adopted by the Forum. Since the adoption of resolution 2015/33, there have been two organization-led initiatives organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, one held from 28 to 30 November 2016 on the theme "Global forest indicators", and one held from 20 to 22 February 2018 on the theme "International conference working across sectors to halt deforestation and increase forest area: from aspiration to action". These initiatives provide direct support to the priorities of the thirteenth session of the Forum, including consideration of its input to the 2018 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

B. United Nations forest instrument

13. In section III of resolution 2015/33, the Council reaffirmed the value of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, decided to extend the timeline of the global objectives on forests to 2030 and decided to rename the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests the "United Nations forest instrument". It also recommended to the General Assembly that it adopt the modifications during its seventieth session. In its resolution 70/199, the Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Council and renamed the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests the United Nations forest instrument and extended the timeline of the global objectives on forests to 2030.

14. In section XIII of resolution 2015/33, the Council requested the Forum to consider replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests with reference to the sustainable development goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. On the basis of the recommendations of the Forum's open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group and working group, the Forum, at its special session held in January 2017, agreed on the matter. In its resolution 71/286, the General Assembly, recalling the recommendation of the Council in its resolution 2017/4, decided to amend the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the United Nations forest instrument to read: "To enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals".

C. Catalysing financing for implementation

15. In section IV of its resolution 2015/33, the Council welcomed the positive work carried out by the facilitative process[2] and decided to upgrade and rename it the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. Accordingly, the Network was to promote the design of national forest financing strategies to mobilize resources for sustainable forest management, facilitate access to existing and emerging financing mechanisms, including the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, and serve as a clearing house for existing, new and emerging financing opportunities and as a tool for sharing lessons learned from successful projects.

16. In support of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, the Council decided that clear priorities of the Network should be set and that collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests should be strengthened in Network activities. The Council requested the Forum secretariat to: (a) recommend ways to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the operation of the Network and submit them for consideration by the Forum at its thirteenth session; and (b) engage in discussions with the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility in order to facilitate collaboration on supporting eligible countries in gaining access to funding for sustainable forest management. In addition, the Council invited the Global Environment Facility to consider options for establishing a focal area on forests during its seventh replenishment period (2018–2022) and continuing to seek to improve existing forest finance modalities, and to consider designating a liaison between the Forum and the Facility. In addition, in paragraph 6 (f) (iv) of resolution 2015/33, the Council requested that guidelines for the work of the Network be developed by the Forum.

17. The priorities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network were subsequently identified in the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, namely: (a) to promote and assist members in designing national forest financing strategies; (b) to assist countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources from all sources; (c) to serve as a clearing house and database and as a tool for sharing lessons learned and best practices from successful projects; and (d) to contribute to the achievement of the global forest goals and targets, as well as priorities contained in the quadrennial programmes of work of the Forum.

18. The Forum secretariat has been working in close collaboration with the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in implementing the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. Detailed information on this collaboration, as well as the assistance provided by the Network, are elaborated in the note by the secretariat on the means of implementation for sustainable forest management submitted to the Forum at its twelfth session (E/CN.18/2017/4), as well as in the note by the secretariat on means of implementation for sustainable forest management for consideration by the Forum at its thirteenth session (E/CN.18/2018/5).

[2] At the special session of its ninth session, the Forum decided to establish a facilitative process to catalyse the implementation of sustainable forest management and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the achievement of the global objectives on forests. The facilitative process had 10 functions. For further information, see E/2009/118-E/CN.18/SS/2009/2, chap. I, sect. B, resolution, para. 3, and E/2011/42-E/CN.18/2011/20, chap. I, sect. B, resolution, para. 32.

19. To facilitate collaboration with the Global Environment Facility, a meeting with the secretariat of the Facility was held in February 2016, in which the two secretariats exchanged information on forest financing and explored cooperation opportunities. Since then, the Forum secretariat has provided technical assistance to a number of countries in their preparation of proposals for forest-related projects for submission to the Facility for financing.

20. During the reporting period, the Global Environment Facility designated two of its staff members to serve as a liaison between the Forum and the Facility in order to facilitate access to funding for sustainable forest management. In support of the decision of the Economic and Social Council, the Facility has continued to implement its comprehensive sustainable forest management programme, launched in mid-2014, which simplified access to forest financing and resulted in targeted funding totalling $750 million in support of all types of forest. As of February 2018, the available funding for sustainable forest management programmes had been fully utilized in 53 national projects and 5 regional or global programmes. A total amount of $824 million in Facility grants had been approved, leveraging an expected amount of $4.8 billion in co-financing. These sustainable forest management projects will be implemented in 63 different countries by 11 different implementing agencies accredited by the Facility.[3]

21. Currently, the seventh replenishment period of the Facility (2018–2022) is under preparation. A new sustainable forest management strategy is being developed, and funding for forests continues to be available through the integrated approach of the sustainable forest management programme incentive mechanism. The seventh replenishment of the Facility will be launched in July 2018.

22. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work, the Forum is to discuss guidelines and measures to increase the effectiveness of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network at its thirteenth session, in May 2018. In this regard, an expert group meeting is expected to be organized jointly by the Government of China and the Forum secretariat in March 2018 in Chengdu, China. The outcome of the meeting will be submitted to the Forum for consideration at its thirteenth session.

D. Monitoring, assessment and reporting

23. Since its inception, the Forum has invited members to submit voluntary national reports on progress made towards implementation of sustainable forest management. In its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council invited Member States to continue to monitor and assess progress towards implementing sustainable forest management, and requested the secretariat of the Forum to propose a cycle and a format for national reporting and the enhancement of voluntary monitoring, assessment and reporting as part of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. The Council requested the secretariat to continue to make the reports on its sessions available to United Nations bodies and other international forest-related organizations, instruments and intergovernmental processes.

24. In February 2017, an expert meeting was held in Brasilia at which experts gathered views on a draft proposal for the format for reporting for submission to the Forum at its twelfth session. The Forum considered the proposed draft and requested

[3] Global Environment Facility, "Sustainable forest management", fact sheet for sixth replenishment period of the Facility, February 2018. Available from www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF_SFMFactsheet_Feb2018.pdf.

the secretariat to further revise the format, as well as the cycle of reporting. The revision was to be made on the basis of consultations held with members of the Forum, other intersessional activities, views expressed during the twelfth session and pilot testing of the first draft of the format.

25. Pilot testing of the draft reporting format was carried out from June to September 2017, with the voluntary participation of 16 Member States. In November 2017, an expert meeting was held by the Forum secretariat in Nairobi to gather views and experiences resulting from the pilot testing. Experts agreed on a revised reporting format proposal and the cycle and timeline for future national reporting, taking into account other forest-related reporting cycles. Experts recommended that first national reports by Member States should be submitted to the Forum in 2019. Further details on the outcome of the expert meeting are contained in the note by the Secretariat on monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions (E/CN.18/2018/4).

E. Secretariat of the Forum

26. In its resolution 2015/33, the Council decided that the secretariat of the Forum should continue to implement its six original functions, namely: (a) to service and support the Forum, its Bureau and related intersessional activities; (b) to administer the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests consistent with guidance provided by the Forum; (c) to manage the strengthened facilitative process; (d) to promote inter-agency collaboration; (e) to provide, upon request, technical support to country-led initiatives and similar initiatives; and (f) to liaise with and facilitate the participation and involvement of countries and other stakeholders. Furthermore, four functions were added: (a) to service and support the working group of the Forum; (b) to manage the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and implement its activities; (c) to promote cooperation on forest-related issues; and (d) to work within the United Nations system to support countries in aligning forests and the international arrangement on forests with their considerations on the post-2015 development agenda.

27. By consistently delivering on its mandated functions, the secretariat of the Forum has played an essential supportive role in the international arrangement on forests. Following the adoption of resolution 2015/33, the Forum established an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group and a working group to support the updating of the United Nations forest instrument and the development of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, as well as the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020. The secretariat of the Forum supported the work of these bodies by providing operational, logistical and substantive support, including by preparing documentation. The ad hoc expert group convened twice, in New York in April 2016 and in Bangkok in October 2016. The outcomes of the meetings provided the basis for the working group meetings held in New York in January 2017. The meetings led to the successful development of proposals for the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum and set the stage for their eventual adoption by the Forum, at its special session, and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the adoption of the strategic plan by the General Assembly. The secretariat of the Forum also provided support for the adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions 70/199 and 71/286 on the United Nations forest instrument.

28. Since the establishment of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network in 2015, the secretariat of the Forum has managed the activities of the Network, including mobilizing forest financing and providing capacity-building, in cooperation with a number of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. During this period, the secretariat mobilized around $2 million from the regular programme of technical cooperation of the United Nations Secretariat and voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests for activities of the Network. Further updated details on the activities of the Network are provided in note by the Secretariat on means of implementation for sustainable forest management (E/CN.18/2018/5).

29. In promoting cooperation on forest-related issues, the Forum secretariat, in its capacity as a member and secretariat of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, consistently facilitates communication among member organizations and provides substantive support to the joint efforts of the Partnership in supporting the Forum. In September 2017, the Forum secretariat and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (which is also a member of the Partnership) signed a memorandum of understanding to promote greater collaboration and joint activities until 2021. Information on those activities is detailed in the note by the Secretariat on the contribution by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional organizations and processes, and major groups and other stakeholders to the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 (E/CN.18/2018/3).

30. Since its inception, the Forum and its secretariat have promoted active engagement on forest-related issues by major groups and other relevant stakeholders, and regional and subregional organizations and processes. The Forum secretariat actively participated in the meetings of the main deliberative bodies of many forest-related international and regional organizations and conventions, promoting the work of the Forum and enhanced cooperation and collaboration. Further information on activities undertaken by the secretariat of the Forum related to major groups and regional engagement is provided in document E/CN.18/2018/3.

31. In addition, in its resolution 2015/33, the Council recommended to the General Assembly that it consider strengthening the secretariat of the Forum, taking into account the provisions of the resolution. Following consideration by the Council and the Assembly on the programme budget implications of Council resolution 2015/33, 4 regular posts (1 P-4, 2 P-3 and 1 G-6) were established in the secretariat.

F. Collaborative Partnership on Forests

32. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests was established in April 2001 in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35, with the objectives of supporting the Forum and its members and enhancing cooperation and coordination on forest issues. Recognizing the contributions of the Partnership since its inception, the Council provided further guidance to the Partnership in its resolution 2015/33 by specifying its core functions, reaffirming the principles of its functioning and encouraging it to consider measures to enhance its support for the Forum and its members. In that context, the Partnership and its member organizations were

encouraged to: (a) strengthen the Partnership by formalizing its working modalities; (b) identify ways to stimulate broader participation; (c) assess its membership and potential added value of additional members; (d) identify ways to actively involve stakeholders; (e) develop a workplan; (f) provide periodic work reports; and (g) further develop and expand its thematic joint initiatives.

33. In response to this guidance, the Partnership considered ways to enhance its working modalities, including by formulating a new policy document that was presented to the Forum during its twelfth session. The policy document provides guidance regarding, inter alia, the mission, functions, membership, delivery mechanisms, governance and rules of procedure of the Partnership. The document also identified delivery mechanisms, including through its lead agencies, dialogue by the Partnership and joint initiatives, to stimulate broader participation by existing member organizations in its various activities, as well as to actively involve major groups and other stakeholders in activities of the Partnership.

34. The Partnership undertook a study on mapping and on the gap analysis of forest-related activities of its members in order to assess its membership and the potential added value of additional members. In accordance with resolution 2015/33 and taking into account the findings of the study, the Partnership has been considering expansion of its membership. It will decide on the current membership requests prior to the thirteenth session of the Forum, considering the potential benefits and contributions such additional members could potentially bring to the Partnership.

35. The Partnership also advanced the development of its workplan, which is intended to identify priorities for collective actions by all members or subsets of members and include the resource implications of the planned actions. It is aligned with the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work, taking into account the relevant workplans of members. The workplan will continue to be developed on a periodic basis to maintain alignment with the strategic plan and the future quadrennial programmes of work of the Forum. The workplan for the period 2017–2020 sets out recurrent activities and the joint initiatives of the Partnership, as well as activities to strengthen the Partnership pursuant to Council resolution 2015/33. The workplan is expected to be presented to the Forum during its thirteenth session.

36. The Partnership reviewed its joint initiatives as key delivery mechanisms and decided to retire those initiatives that had already fulfilled their mandate, while establishing new ones in response to the emerging needs and evolving mandates in line with Council resolution 2015/33 and the strategic plan. Information on the joint initiatives is provided in document E/CN.18/2018/3.

G. Regional and subregional involvement

37. In section VIII of its resolution 2015/33, the Council requested the Forum to strengthen its collaboration with relevant regional and subregional entities in order to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument, as well as to facilitate their inputs to sessions of the Forum. It also requested the secretariat of the Forum to consult with relevant regional and subregional partners on means to enhance collaboration between them and the Forum. In addition, it invited regional and subregional entities to consider developing or strengthening programmes on sustainable forest management and forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum. It also invited Member States to consider, on a voluntary basis and as appropriate, establishing or strengthening regional and subregional

processes or platforms for forest policy development, dialogue and coordination to promote sustainable forest management while seeking to avoid fragmentation.

38. In September 2016, the secretariat of the Forum and the secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization jointly organized and convened an expert meeting in Tehran to explore ways and means to enhance the involvement of regional and subregional entities in the international arrangement on forests. Experts put forth a set of proposed actions to enhance regional and subregional involvement in the work of the international arrangement as input to the development of the strategic plan for forests. As a result, the strategic plan recognizes the role of regional and subregional organizations and processes in providing a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and as important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets. In addition, members of the Forum were invited in the strategic plan to consider strengthening regional and subregional forest policy development, dialogue and coordination to advance the strategic plan.

39. Following the twelfth session of the Forum, the secretariat organized an expert meeting on regional and subregional input to the United Nations Forum on Forests, held in Nairobi on 20 and 21 November 2017. Participants discussed the format and periodicity of the regional and subregional reports to the Forum and their inputs to the 2018 session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and how to use the potential of regional and subregional entities in supporting the work of the Forum. In addition, since the adoption by the Council of its resolution 2015/33, regional and subregional organizations and processes have been engaged in selected activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, as well as the work related to the development of the proposal for a cycle and a format for national reporting to the Forum. Information on these issues is provided in document E/CN.18/2018/3.

H. Involvement of major groups and other stakeholders

40. In section IX of its resolution 2015/33, the Council recognized the importance of the continued and enhanced participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the sessions of the Forum and its intersessional activities. It invited major groups and other stakeholders to enhance their contributions to the work of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, and invited Member States to consider enhancing the participation and contributions of representatives of major groups and other stakeholders in country-led initiatives. In that regard, the Council requested the secretariat of the Forum to promote the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the work of the Forum, in particular leaders from the private and non-governmental sectors, including forest industries, local communities and philanthropic organizations, and to enhance the interaction of the Forum with such stakeholders.

41. In October 2016, the secretariat of the Forum and the Canadian Forest Service jointly convened a two-day expert meeting in Ottawa on strengthening the engagement of major groups and other stakeholders in the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. The meeting identified strategies and options to strengthen stakeholder engagement in the international arrangement on forests, which served as input to discussions on the development of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030. Throughout the consultation process for the development of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work, representatives of major

groups and other stakeholders presented their views and perspectives in an open manner alongside government experts. Major groups also submitted their written proposals and comments on issues under discussion in the ad hoc expert group.

42. As a result, the strategic plan recognizes that effective implementation of sustainable forest management depends on the contributions of all relevant stakeholders, including forest owners, indigenous peoples, local communities, local authorities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, women, children, youth and scientific, academic and philanthropic organizations. For that reason, the Forum endeavours to work with major groups and other relevant stakeholders to identify ways to enhance their contributions to the achievement of the global forest goals and targets at all levels and their interactions with the Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including through networks, advisory groups and other mechanisms to raise awareness, foster the exchange and dissemination of information and facilitate coordinated inputs.

43. At the twelfth session of the Forum, member States encouraged major groups and other relevant stakeholders to continue their involvement in the work of the Forum, including by elaborating proposals or workplans on how they could contribute to the implementation of the strategic plan and the Forum's quadrennial programme of work, and to present such proposals or plans to the Forum at its thirteenth session.

44. In November 2017, the secretariat of the Forum organized an expert meeting on the contributions of major groups and other relevant stakeholders to the implementation of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work, held in Nairobi. During the meeting, experts discussed proposals or workplans on the contribution of major groups and other relevant stakeholders to the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work and elaborated inputs for the thirteenth session of the Forum on the contributions of forests to the Sustainable Development Goals. The recommendations resulting from the meeting are contained in document E/CN.18/2018/3.

I. Support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

45. In the light of the objectives of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 and the specific mandates and functions of various components of the international arrangement on forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests, the secretariat of the Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests each have particular roles to play in assisting countries to achieve the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets. In this context, the Economic and Social Council, in section X of its resolution 2015/33, stressed the need to ensure coherence and consistency between the international arrangement on forests and the post-2015 development agenda as well as with multilateral forest-related agreements. It decided that the Forum should contribute to the implementation, follow-up and review of the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, including through contributions to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Council also invited the Forum to consider its role in this regard in the context of its strategic plan.

46. By incorporating related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and forest-related multilateral agreements into its six global forest goals and 26 targets, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 provides a framework for forest-related contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations forest instrument and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals.

47. The strategic plan also provides that the Forum, as a functional commission of the Council, should contribute to the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, including through the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests on global forest indicators, and highlight the contribution of forests to the Sustainable Development Goals, which are reviewed at the annual sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

48. In addition, the Forum fully integrated the 2030 Agenda into its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020 by taking into account the Sustainable Development Goal review cycle of the high-level political forum in the work of the annual session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in the context of the implementation of the strategic plan.

49. In this context, the United Nations Forum on Forests has continued to provide its contributions to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development since 2015.

50. For the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum, held under the theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015", the Forum submitted the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of its eleventh session, entitled "The forests we want: beyond 2015" (see Economic and Social Council decision 2015/254), as its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, stressing the significant role of forests in the implementation of the sustainable development programme beyond 2015.

51. Through the Chair of its twelfth session, the Forum submitted its input to the 2016 meeting of the high-level political forum, held under the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind", highlighting the wide range of contributions of forests to the 2030 Agenda as well as their key contributions, challenges and opportunities in the context of that theme.

52. At its twelfth session, the Forum also submitted its input to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum, held under the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", highlighting the contribution of forests to Sustainable Development Goal 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture) and Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), and the means of implementation for sustainable forest management (Goal 17).

J. United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030

53. In section XI of its resolution 2015/33, the Council decided that the Forum should develop a strategic plan for the period 2017–2030 to guide the work of the international arrangement on forests. The Council also decided that the strategic plan should be aligned with the objectives of the international arrangement on forests and should incorporate a mission and vision, the global objectives on forests and the forest-related aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as identify the roles of different actors and the framework for reviewing implementation, and outline a communication strategy to raise awareness of the work of the arrangement. The Council requested the Forum to operationalize the strategic plan through quadrennial programmes of work that set out priority actions and resource needs.

54. In the same resolution, the Council established an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group and a working group to develop proposals on the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum. On the basis of the initial proposal by the ad hoc expert group and the subsequent recommendations by the Forum's working group, the Forum, at its special session held in January 2017, agreed on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020, which were subsequently approved by the Council. The strategic plan was then adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/285.

55. The strategic plan features a set of six global forest goals and 26 targets building upon existing international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals, including the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the global objectives on forests of the United Nations forest instrument. It contains a section on the implementation framework, in which roles and responsibilities of different actors are set out. The strategic plan is aimed at stimulating and catalysing ambitious and transformational actions by all actors at all levels to achieve its mission of promoting sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda, including by strengthening cooperation, coordination, coherence, synergies and political commitment and actions at all levels.

56. The Forum implements the strategic plan through its quadrennial programme of work. Sessions of the Forum within the quadrennium have included a standing agenda item on the implementation of the strategic plan, which covers related technical discussion and exchange of experiences, policy dialogue, voluntary national contributions and United Nations system-wide contributions. Progress towards implementation of the strategic plan has also been included in the standing agenda item on monitoring, assessment and reporting. Further information is contained in the notes by the Secretariat on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 prepared for the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Forum (E/CN.18/2017/2 and E/CN.18/2018/2).

IV. Conclusion

57. The eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, held in New York from 4 to 15 May 2015, marked a major milestone in international policy on the promotion and implementation of the sustainable management of all types of forests at all levels. At that session, members of the Forum agreed on a comprehensive draft resolution on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, which was subsequently adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2015/33. The resolution strengthened the international arrangement and extended it to 2030; set its objectives and defined its components and the means to strengthen them; and devised a strategic direction for the arrangement and its components. The resolution also provided for the integration of the work of the arrangement with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

58. Since the adoption of the resolution, intensive work was undertaken to implement its provisions, involving members of the Forum and various stakeholders, by the stated deadline of March 2017. Specifically, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017–2020 were developed and adopted; the Forum's sessions were restructured; the non-

legally binding instrument on all types of forests was renamed the "United Nations forest instrument", its global objectives on forests were extended until 2030 and it was updated to include reference to the 2030 Agenda; the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network was operationalized and its guidelines will be considered at the thirteenth session of the Forum; and the Forum's contribution to the follow-up, review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been streamlined into the work of the Forum. Measures have also been taken to enhance the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders, as well as regional and subregional entities. Substantive work has been also undertaken by the Forum secretariat, as well as the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in implementing the provisions of resolution 2015/33.

59. Prior to the adoption of resolution 2015/33, all financial implications were included in the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2015 session (A/70/430) and subsequently approved by the General Assembly in section XVI of its resolution 70/248 A. The present report would not entail further financial implications.

60. While implementation of resolution 2015/33 has been timely and successful, the most important issue remaining now is promoting actions and collaboration among members of the Forum, as well as partners and stakeholders, to implement the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030 and to achieve the goals and targets of the strategic plan.

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

Trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present note covers the contributions to and expenditures of the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests for the year 2017. The generous contributions of donor countries to the Fund are gratefully acknowledged. Without them, implementation of many of the mandated activities would not have been possible.

The present note was prepared pursuant to the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017–2020.

* E/CN.18/2018/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, Member States urged donor Governments and organizations, including financial institutions, and others in a position to do so, to provide voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the United Nations Forum on Forests. In order to ensure transparency, the Forum secretariat reports to the Forum at each session on the operation of the Fund, including on the amounts contributed, the source of the contributions and a description of how the funds have been expended. It should be noted that the present note is submitted for information. The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

2. The present note outlines the contributions to and activities funded by the trust fund for the year 2017. Activities were carried out pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/285, on the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, and 62/98, on the United Nations forest instrument, and resolutions of the Forum, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33.

II. Contributions to the trust fund

3. In 2017, five donor countries generously contributed to the trust fund in support of the Forum's mandates, sessions and intersessional activities, as well as the work of the Forum secretariat (see table 1). The total contributions to the fund were approximately $1.17 million, inclusive of programme support costs. Implementation of core activities of the Forum would not have been possible without these contributions, which are gratefully acknowledged.

Table 1
Contributions to the trust fund, 2017
(United States dollars)

Contributor	*Total*
China[a]	340 974
Japan[b]	66 456
Republic of Korea	19 890
Russian Federation	346 510
United States of America	400 000
Total contributions	**1 173 830**
Opening balance, 1 January 2017	1 923 456
Grand total	**3 097 286**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

[a] The amount contributed was for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post.

[b] The amount contributed was for activities on the international arrangement on forests and on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum. The donor has also provided an in-kind contribution of a Junior Programme Officer post.

III. Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017

4. The travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition accounted for 47 per cent of total expenditures during 2017. Staffing of the Secretariat funded from extrabudgetary resources accounted for 39 per cent of total expenditures in 2017. Further information on the expenditures of the trust fund is presented in table 2 and the figure.

Table 2
Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*Total*
Staffing costs[a]	346 526
Travel of representatives and experts	422 146
Travel of staff	104 627
Contractual services[b]	9 000
Operating expenses[c]	8 840
Subtotal	**891 139**
13 per cent programme support costs	115 848
Total	**1 006 987**

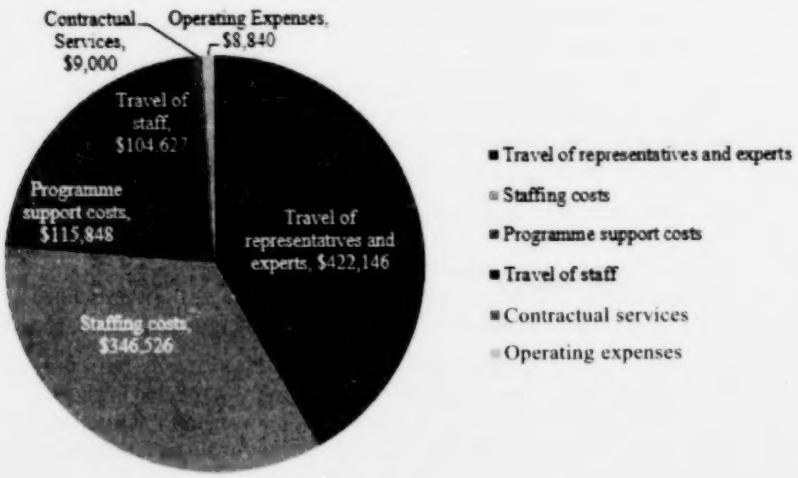
Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017.

[a] Includes staff posts funded from extrabudgetary resources, rental of office space, information technology equipment and other staff-related expenses.

[b] Includes individual contractors' fees.

[c] Includes conference servicing costs, United Nations Development Programme service fees and bank charges.

Expenditures of the trust fund, 2017



5. During 2017, extrabudgetary funds were used to supplement funds from the regular budget (Programme 7, Economic and Social Affairs, subprogramme 8, sustainable forest management). These contributions were crucial for funding a significant part of the activities of the programme of work of the Forum secretariat in 2017, including the following:

(a) **Staffing of the secretariat**. In order to implement mandated activities, the posts of two staff members in the Professional and General Service categories were funded from extrabudgetary resources using primarily unearmarked resources of the trust fund. During 2017, one post at the P-3 level and one General Service post were funded from extrabudgetary resources. In 2018, it is expected that one post at the P-3 level and one General Service post will continue to be funded from extrabudgetary resources;

(b) **Travel of representatives and experts**. Travel assistance was provided to facilitate the participation of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings in 2017. Those meetings included meetings of the working group, from 16 to 19 January 2017, and the special session of the Forum, on 20 January, all of which were held at United Nations Headquarters, the twelfth session of Forum, held at Headquarters on 25 April 2016 and from 1 to 5 May 2017, and intersessional meetings;

(c) **Travel of staff**. Fund resources were used to supplement regular budget funds to cover the travel costs of Forum secretariat staff members participating in key international forest-related events, including meetings related to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, monitoring, assessment and reporting, regional coordination, and meetings related to strengthening engagement with major groups and to the field of forest communications;

(d) **Contractual services, conference servicing and operating expenses**. During 2017, extrabudgetary funds were used to cover costs relating to individual contractors, conference servicing, United Nations Development Programme service fees and bank charges related to expert group meetings held away from Headquarters.

IV. Achievements and results

6. The following achievements and results are attributable to contributions made to the trust fund:

(a) The adoption by the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/285 of 27 April 2017, of the United Nations strategic plan for forests for 2017–2030, and the adoption by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2017/4 of 20 April 2017, of the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for 2017–2020;

(b) The successful convening of the twelfth session of the Forum, which was the first technical session, as part of the new restructured format, and focused on technical issues related to sustainable forest management, strategies to promote implementation of the strategic plan and thematic priorities related to the annual theme and reviews of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(c) Fund resources were used to supplement funds from the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and the regular programme of technical cooperation for activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, which is building capacity to mobilize forest financing for sustainable forest management in pilot countries;

(d) Activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting, including ongoing work related to the development of global forest indicators and the development of a new format and cycle for voluntary national reporting to the Forum, were carried out using resources from the trust fund;

(e) Observance of the International Day of Forests in 2017 through activities including special events at Headquarters and social media campaigns, which were carried out using resources from the trust fund;

(f) Resources from the trust fund were also used to support the travel of Bureau members and representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meetings of the Forum, including the twelfth session of the Forum;

(g) The trust fund continues to be a critical source of funding for supplementing the staffing needs of the Forum secretariat, which is the smallest division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The fund currently covers the salaries of two staff members (in the Professional and General Service categories) of the secretariat, funded from extrabudgetary resources.

V. In-kind contributions

7. The Forum secretariat would like to express its gratitude to the Governments of China and Japan for funding Junior Programme Officer posts in 2017. Both staff members have played an important role in supporting the planning and organization of Forum-related meetings and, in particular, in activities relating to capacity development activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and on monitoring, assessment and reporting to the Forum.

VI. Priorities and challenges

8. Since the Forum was established, its mandates and outputs have steadily grown. The human and budgetary resources needed by the secretariat in order to support the Forum and its member States have been highlighted and well recognized in resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33.

9. Since its inception in May 2015, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, in its pilot implementation phase, has contributed to the design of national forest financing strategies and assisted 13 countries in mobilizing, accessing and enhancing the effective use of existing financial resources. A key challenge for the Forum secretariat is to raise adequate resources in order to be able to scale up the activities of the Network.

10. The level of dedicated contributions to fund the travel of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to Forum-related meetings has declined in recent years. This poses a challenge for the Forum secretariat in its efforts to facilitate balanced representation of both developed and developing countries at Forum meetings.

11. Sustained and adequate human and financial resources will be critical to enabling the secretariat to support the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests and the achievement of the six global forest goals and 26 associated targets. Meeting the level of ambition and carrying out the vision of the strategic plan will require the scaling up of ongoing activities related to capacity development,

mobilizing forest financing, monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress in implementation, promoting regional coordination, communication and outreach and strengthening stakeholder engagement, including with the private sector. It is thus recommended that sustainable and consistent extrabudgetary funds continue to be provided so as to provide the secretariat with a stable basis for the performance of its functions.

Table 3
Estimated expenditures from the trust fund, 2018

(United States dollars)

Expenditure	*2018*
Staffing costs[a]	316 000
Consultants and experts[b]	225 000
Travel of representatives and experts[c]	335 000
Travel of staff	100 000
Contractual services	80 000
Subtotal	**1 056 000**
13 per cent programme support costs	137 280
Total	**1 193 280**
Closing balance, 31 December 2017	2 306 660
Expected contributions, 2018	1 000 000
Total expected funds, 2018	**3 306 660**

Note: The figures contained herein have not been audited and represent, as such, an estimate as at 31 December 2017. Estimated expenditures refer to funds required to implement the current programme of work of the Forum secretariat; they do not include funding for any additional activities that may be decided upon at the thirteenth session of the Forum.

[a] Estimate based on the cost of funding two posts from extrabudgetary resources in 2018.

[b] Includes costs of engaging consultants to support Forum-related meetings and the work of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network.

[c] Includes travel costs of representatives and experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to the thirteenth session of the Forum, in 2018.